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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 0284
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE IMMEDIATE 2390
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE 8663
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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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DEPT FOR NEA AND IO/UNP

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TAGS: [UNSC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LE](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON SUPPORT FOR LEBANON SPECIAL TRIBUNAL
-- ITALY

REF: A. STATE 70478

[1](#)B. ROME 1011

[1](#)C. WELCH-RAGAGLINI TELCON 5/18/07

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Ronald P. Spogli, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Ambassador May 23 made the points on the Special Lebanon Tribunal to FM Massimo D'Alema. D'Alema said he had spoken to both the Lebanese PM and French FM. The French were pushing hard for immediate action. However, while the GOI favored the resolution, it advocated waiting for UNSC action until after the term of the Lebanese parliament expires on May 31. This would remove the argument of impinging on Lebanese sovereignty and would allow time to get greater UNSC unanimity. He acknowledged the Ambassador's argument about the risks of delay, but said the GOI felt that on balance it was best to wait a few more days. He said Lebanese PM Siniora understood the logic of the Italian position. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On May 23 Ambassador delivered ref A points by phone to FM D'Alema. (The Ambassador also pressed the issue in a recent meeting with Prime Minister Romano Prodi, ref B.) The FM said he had had two conversations with Lebanese PM Siniora and one with French FM Kouchner. The French were pushing very hard for an immediate resolution. But the Italian view was that it was best to wait until after May 31, when the term of the Lebanese parliament is up, in order to take away the argument that UNSC action would impinge on Lebanese sovereignty. In addition, D'Alema said, the GOI felt that it was important to have unanimity, or near unanimity, on the Council. We need the Russians on board, he said, and there is a G8 ministerial in Potsdam on May 30.

[1](#)3. (C) D'Alema said the GOI strongly supported the resolution, the question was timing. The French are pushing hard, but the GOI strongly recommends acting after the 31st. The Ambassador asked what Siniora had thought about that. D'Alema said that he thought the Lebanese PM had understood the logic of waiting, and that it was better to get unanimity than go ahead precipitously without a greater number of countries on board.

[1](#)4. (C) The Ambassador noted that there were real risks in waiting. The battles in Lebanon may have nothing to do with

the Tribunal, but they certainly indicated that the passage of time brings the risk of unforeseen events that could have a further impact on the Tribunal. Time was not a friend. D'Alema responded that he appreciated that, and it was true, but the GOI felt that on balance it was best to wait a few days and get greater unanimity on the Council.

15. (C) In the Prodi meeting on May 10, the PM had acknowledged the need to establish the tribunal, but Prodi too had raised concerns in that meeting on the timing question. The Ambassador told him we needed a Chapter VII resolution now and we needed Italy's support. On May 18 NEA A/S Welch contacted his MFA counterpart, Middle East Department Director General Cesare Ragaglini (ref C). Ragaglini, like D'Alema, advocated delaying the tribunal vote until after the May 31 Lebanese Parliament term expired. Welch responded that it was important to move now and warned that delays could create additional opportunities for violence. On May 16, Pol M/C had pressed Ragaglini's deputy, Luciano Pezzotti, on the issue. Pezzotti said Italy supported establishment of the tribunal, and a Chapter VII resolution, but it wanted close consultations on the text and it was concerned about the possible risks for Italy's UNIFIL troops in southern Lebanon.

Spogli